A Report respecting the condition of the Blacks in the U. S. & what have been the exertions for Christianizing them.

For the Society of Inquiry on Missions.

May 1st 1815.

Brethren—

The subject of our Report respects a fallen & deprived people. Their natural rights have been taken away, & they are now writhing under the yoke of bondage— Orators, Poets & Statesmen, whose tongues are now lifeless & cold, have commiserated their sad fortunes. Their efforts have not been unavailing. Still, however, the plaint of slavery is here & there heard. It is heard in our own land: & as long as it is so, they will claim our pity & condolence.

It is to be regretted that men, who fled into this country, from persecution & tyranny, did not here afford an asylum for their fellow sufferers, instead of fixing heavier chains on them, than ever galled their own. It is to be regretted that slavery here has become an engine of political jargon, that there is so much ignorant declamation on the subject— But above all, it is to be regretted that more attention has not been paid to the interests of their souls— & that more

exertions have not been made, to free them from that bondage which is most to be dreaded, the bondage of sin.

To give a statement of what has been done for the Blacks to this end, & an account of their condition &c. is my object.

I. A few general outlines. (Southern States)

1. The Blacks are not taught to read (in the Southern States) except some of the more wealthy in Philadelphia, & some others in various parts, who are united to the Presbyterians. These are few in number.
2. They have preaching exclusively for themselves, in various parts - by Preachers of almost every description - denomination & rank. By far the most of them are Baptists. There are many itinerating black preachers. We have no documents to ascertain the number of communicants except in a few places.
3. There are but a few Churches in the Southern States of any description - & these are at a considerable distance from each other.
4. But where there are Churches, the Blacks en

joy the same privileges of attending as the whites – & generally, there is no separation, but they receive the same Pastoral care, in the ordinances of Baptism & the Lords Supper.

5. The Black Preachers are not Pastors.

6. They are generally disposed to go to Church more so perhaps, than the white people. They most of them are well clothed – & none of them are so deficient in clothing as to prevent them from attending Church – or appearing in public on all Holy-days. Many are very gaily dressed.

7. Their masters generally favour their attendance upon Divine Service. Much of this favour depends upon the character of the master – Some are governed by prudential considerations – & although the irreligious do not cordially favour their receiving religious instruction – yet none of them are opposed to it.

8. Nothing can be done for the Blacks, separately, in a public way (i.e. by any soci

city at a distance) yet ministers, with whom the people are acquainted & in whom they can place confidence, have full permission to preach to them privately. But a stranger can ~~only~~ preach to the blacks only when they are assembled with the whites & thereon, there are no encouragements for sending missionaries exclusively to the Blacks: & perhaps in most places would not be permitted.

9. The great majority of the Blacks are united to the Baptist Church - a considerable number to the Methodists & a few to the Presbyterian Church. Black-Preachers are numerous - their labours are confined to the people of their own colour. They are very ignorant, only a few of them being able to read. They are enthusiastic, ranting declaimers. Their object is, to touch the passions, which is easily excited. Let one be excited, the contagion will spread through the whole assembly - till they are roused into a heated commotion. When they are once excited by this wild fire, they can no more be silenced than the raging tornado

They rush beyond all bounds of conception in their clamorous meetings— Some are shouting— Some clapping their hands— & Some are singing glory. They surpass the enthusiastic methodist in their uncouth camp-meetings— There is no order nor decency— but there is every thing shocking to a man of feeling. Such is the prepuence they give to a black, fluent, ranting Orator that they will have a judicious, sound instructive Preacher, & go ten miles off to hear one of their own sort.

To this general characteristic there are a few exceptions. Some possess good indices of genuine piety— & a considerable knowledge of practical religion: & these some who are able to repeat large portions of Scripture, & a number of Psalms & Hymns. A few of their ministers can read— & are considered as sound & humble preachers.

The number of black communicants throughout the U. S is very considerable. In the South the most of these are Baptists— In the north, I cannot tell which denomination has the great-

est number. One Reason perhaps, why so many of them are Baptists, is, that they are admitted to all the Privileges of white members. vote upon every question that comes before the Church - & are thus upon a footing of equality with all.

The blacks of the north have more intelligence & more learning than those of the south.

II. The Labours of John Chavis, missionary to the Blacks.

John Chavis was educated by the Rev. John B. Smith, & sent by the Gen.l Assembly as missionary to the Blacks - in this capacity he laboured from 1801, to 1808 when the Assembly saw fit to dispense with his services - The field of his labours was a part of Virginia, & part of N. Carolina. From his journals, I have noticed the following particulars. More than three fourths of his hearers were white people. He seldom preached except on the Sabbath - & was

but seldom engaged in instructing the Blacks when out of the Pulpit. He flew from place to place with great rapidity, so that he never stopped a single week to promote the interest of rivals. The Blacks never assembled alone. But little preaching in that region, & those who were called pious did not understand the doctrines of Grace. As a Specimen of his vanity, he relates in his journal, that the people in many places, invited him to stay to settle, to call again, & he relates that some thought that he preached the best sermons they ever heard. His journal is blind & unsatisfactory, & not much confidence dependence to be placed upon it. He was an unpopular preacher, very among the blacks inattentive to his duty, had too many high notions to associate with the blacks, but he courted the favour of the white people, & was especially fond of their smiles.

III. The following facts were gathered from a letter of Dr. Rogers, (a Baptist minister) to Dr. Gunn Dated May 5th. 1803. "The Blacks in the Southern States, have from time to time been particularly attended to. A very large number of them are members of the Baptist Church, in the States of Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, Georgia & the Carolinas. The first coloured Baptist Church in Savannah consists of 400 Communicants, the 2d, which was stablished the 26th. Dec. 1802, consists of 200 communicants, the 3, which was constituted the 2 Jan. 183, called the Ogeche coloured Baptist Church, consists of 250 Communicants— making a total of 850, in Savannah & its vicinity. They have Divine Service 3 times every Sabbath. The Lord's Supper is administered quarterly, & for the 3 last years, they have received by Baptism from 10 to 64 persons, on each of those occasions."

In Charleston, the Blacks are numerous. But they are not formed into separate congre-

gations, as in Savannah - they are united with the white people. Here the Majority of them are Methodists. The Baptists are numerous, & then are besides a few Presbytrians & Episcopalians. I have not been able to ascertain the whole number.

IV Particular Places.

In Philadelphia, are 15,000 Blacks - Some came from the Southern States, & others fled from the revolutionary commotions of St. Domingo. Some of these are Roman Catholics, & many are very wealthy. They have schools regularly established. They have an Episcopal Church & a Black Preacher in it. This is the gayest congregation in the city, & the most wealthy - Its members surpass others in their gaudy dress.

The Presbytrian congregation in this city is less ostentatious & more modest & humble than the other. Many of its members posess the marks of real piety. Their Preacher is a black man by the name of Foster, who was educated by the Rev. Gideon Blackburn. He is very useful & respectable.

The Methodist Church in Philadelphia is large & rich. But there is so much disorder, confusion & noise in their meetings, that the civil magistrates are frequently obliged to interpose their authority to silence the disturbance.

Besides all these there is a Baptist Church.

In the city of New York, the Blacks are united to the various denominations - I do not know how they are distributed, nor what their number is -

Schenectady appears to be the centre of the Empire of free Blacks in the north. They are very numerous, considering the latitude of the place, & the most of them are miserably poor, only a few of them possessing Houses & lots. The majority of them are very ignorant & intemperate. But, from the measures lately taken, by the Professors of the Union College, we may hope for a gradual reformation among them. A school was established in 1811, by the Professors, & patronized by them. Mr. Lake

a black Preacher, has the charge of this School, & preaches regularly to the Blacks. #

V. Present Conditions &c—

The condition of the Southern Slaves has been much ameliorated since the Revolution

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Thro' an many peculiarities in Mr. Lake's manner of preaching— his not only peculiar, but in manner he has a flaw in the matter of all his discourses, if he has a new text, his sermon is old. His manner is gennally this," After making these introductory remarks, I shall divide my discourse into four propositions. 1st Consider the meaning of the import— 2d Consider a certain work that must be performed & whose prorogative it is to work— 3d Some consideration of the worthies. 4th & Lastly, a short application of the subject, & then come to a brief conclusion, but I weary your patience— & so ff—"

It is said that Mr. Lake is subject to intoxication.

ary wear. When abused by thir owners, they have a right to appeal to thir Masters, who, viewing them as thir property, which they do not wish to be abused, & as suppliants for protection, are generally inclind to treat them with tenderness & compasion. Hence, contrary to the ideas of the Northern people, the affection of a Slave for his Master is strong - & he will sometimes sacrifice his own life in his master's defence - Moreover a cruel overseer is a detestable character at the South among all ranks.

Whenever a gentleman resides at a distance from his Plantation, he employs an overseer in whom he can place implicit confidence - that his Slaves may be kindly treated. Ministers are often employed in this service. The blacks are generally perverse in thir dispositions

The authority of a Master over his Slave is arbitrary, except they are not to destroy thir limbs or thir lives.

The vices to which they are addicted, are, stealing, quarrelling, swearing, & licentiousness- They lay no restraint upon their passions- The connection between man & woman cannot properly be called a state of marriage- because they are not joined by any legal ceremony, & because the connection is dissolved according to the dictates of a capricious fancy or the interests of masters. To violate this sacred tie, is no crime then, it can as easily be applied as the union. It frequently happens that the young females are initiated by the white men, after which there is no barrier against the most wanton manners among themselves. Could you have a fair picture of licentiousness here, you would tremble for the future happiness of the Southern States. For, when we consider that all sense of shame & of modesty is obliterated in the breast of the female, that the passions of the young white as well as black men

are unbridled, & finally, that the climate is conducive to vice, we must expect that nothing except the Sovreign Grace of God can save them from the most miserable consequences as a society.

Num. of Slaves in the U. S. according to the Census of 1810.

Connecticut	310	Michigan Ter.	24
R. Island	108	Illinois Ter.	128
N. York	15,017	Dist. of Columbia	5,395
N. Jersey	10,851	Total	1,191,259
Pennsylvania	795		
Delaware	4,177		
Maryland	111,502		
Virginia	392,518		
N. Carolina	168,824		
S. Carolina	196,345		
Georgia	105,218		
Kentucky	80,516		
Tenn.	None		
Louisiana	44,535		
Miss. Territory	17,088		
Indiana Ter.	237		
Orleans Ter.	34,660		
Louisiana Ter.	3,011		

N. B.

The Slave Trade was abolished in the U. S. in 1810.

The Blacks increas in population faster than any other people in the U. S.

In all the Northern States, Slaves have been decreasing for 35 years past, but in the Southern they have been continually increasing during that time.